

NEWS RELEASE- For Immediate Distribution

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**Idaho Preferred® Growers Getting Ready for Farmers Markets
Across the State**
Asparagus is optimum now through mid May

BOISE, Idaho (May 1, 2007) - Farmers Markets across the state are now open for business providing local growers the opportunity to show off the freshest produce the season has to offer. This month's specialty crop is asparagus and Idaho Preferred® growers are harvesting this short-season vegetable quickly, while getting ready for the rest of the growing season.

With its nutty flavor and rich green color, asparagus is most abundant each year around Mother's Day. The harvest season for Idaho asparagus is typically from late March to early June as the warm spring days and cool nights create the perfect crop growing conditions. Initially, the lingering cool days of 2007 made production of the Idaho crop of asparagus fall behind, however, Mother Nature is now making up for it. Production is full speed ahead with asparagus coming up so fast that one can literally watch it grow.

Typically, asparagus is not the main product, most popular crop, or even a determining factor of a farm's overall profitability. However, in the case of Sandstone Farms in Kuna, Idaho, it happens to be a majority of their farm business. "We have a 40 acre farm, 20 of which are asparagus fields," said owner Larry Hanson, a member of the Idaho Preferred® Advisory Board. "We pick 2,000-2,500 pounds every other day from late March to mid June totaling around 50,000 pounds for the season." This means that 60-70 percent of the total farm income is derived from its asparagus production.

In contrast, Symms Fruit Ranch in Caldwell, Idaho has about 4,500 total acres of farm land, only 60 of which produces asparagus. "Asparagus is about the smallest cash

crop we have,” said Larry Ball of Symms Fruit Ranch. “But that doesn’t make it any less tasty,” he adds.

Asparagus is best enjoyed by those who wait patiently with eager anticipation for the Idaho crop to appear at local Farmer’s Markets and grocery stores to indulge in this healthy local specialty crop.

For more information about asparagus and other fresh, quality products offered by Idaho Preferred® members, please visit www.idahopreferred.com or contact Leah Clark at the Idaho State Department of Agriculture: 208-332-8684.

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